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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

International Application No. : PCT/EP00/04283
International Filing Date : May 10, 2000
Applicants : Gary P. Burns and Matthew R. Dubois
For : DOCK-TO-DOCK RECEIVING AND
DISPENSING FOR POSTAL PROCESSING CENTER

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Commissioner for Patents
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Dear Sir:

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Claims:

Claims 1-16 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A postal processing facility including a sorting system that receives mail in trays and sorts mail to trays and a dock area including a plurality of transportation docks that provide interface with transportation vehicles, comprising:

a receiving and dispatching system (34)-having at least one receiving and dispatching assembly (44)-that loads trays of sorted mail from a sorting system to transportation fixtures and unloads trays of mail to be sorted from transportation fixtures to the sorting system; and

wherein said receiving and dispatching system (34)-is at the dock area of the postal processing facility thereby providing substantially direct movement of fixtures between transportation vehicles (26)-and said receiving and dispatching system-(34).

2. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 1 wherein said receiving and dispatching system (34)-includes at least one receiving and dispatching assembly (44)-that is adapted to both unload transportation fixtures and load transportation fixtures.

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3. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 2 including a plurality of said receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(34)~~, a sortation conveyor ~~(38)~~ having a main line ~~(40)~~ defined by a conveying surface and a plurality of spurs ~~(42)~~, extending from said ~~mail-main~~ line ~~(40)~~ to said receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(44)~~.

4. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 3 wherein said spurs ~~(42)~~ include separate spur lines for moving trays from said sortation conveyor ~~(38)~~ to the receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(44)~~ and for moving trays from said receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(44)~~ to said sortation conveyor ~~(38)~~.

5. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 3 wherein said conveying surface is a continuous loop ~~(Fig.5)~~.

6. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 3 wherein said conveying surface is elevated with respect to said receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(44)~~.

7. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 3 including individual enclosures around said receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(44)~~ with a moveable gate ~~(56)~~ that can be selectively opened to allow other transportation fixtures in other receiving and dispatching assemblies ~~(44)~~ to be loaded or unloaded while one transportation fixture is being removed.

8. (Amended) The postal processing facility of claim 1 wherein said transportation fixtures are wheeled carts.

9. (Amended) A postal processing facility including a sorting system that receives mail in trays and sorts mail to trays, comprising:

a receiving and dispatching system ~~(34)~~ that loads trays of sorted mail from a sorting system to transportation fixtures and unloads trays of mail to be sorted from transportation fixtures to the sorting system; and

wherein said receiving and dispatching system ~~(34)~~ includes at least one receiving and

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dispatching assembly (44)-that is adapted to both unload transportation fixtures and load transportation fixtures.

10. (Amended) In a postal processing facility (20)-including a sorting system that receives mail in trays and sorts mail to trays and a dock area including a plurality of transportation docks that provide interface with transportation vehicles-(26)-, a method of receiving trays of mail from transportation fixtures and dispatching trays of mail to transportation fixtures, comprising:

providing a receiving and dispatching system (34)-having at least one receiving and dispatching assembly (44)-that is operable to load trays of sorted mail from a sorting system to transportation fixtures and unload trays of mail to be sorted from transportation fixtures to the sorting system; and

substantially directly moving fixtures between transportation vehicles (26)-and said receiving and dispatching system-(34).

11. (Amended) The method of receiving and dispatching trays in claim 10 including positioning said receiving and dispatching system (34)-at said dock area.

12. (Amended) In a postal processing facility including a sorting system that receives mail in trays and sorts mail to trays, a method of receiving trays of mail from transportation fixtures and dispatching trays of mail to transportation fixtures, comprising:

providing a receiving and dispatching system (34)-adapted to load and unload transportation fixtures;

loading trays of sorted mail from a sorting system (34)-to transportation fixtures and unloading trays of mail to be sorted from transportation fixtures to the sorting machine-(32); and

wherein said loading and unloading include commonly loading and unloading with a common receiving and dispatching assembly-(44).

13. (Amended) The method of receiving and dispatching in claim 12 including providing a receiving and dispatching system (34)-having a transport mechanism (50)-adapted to load trays of mail to transportation fixtures and unload trays of mail from the transportation fixtures.

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14. (Amended) The method of receiving and dispatching in claim 13 including providing a plurality of said transport mechanisms ~~(50)~~.

15. (Amended) The method of receiving and dispatching in claim 14 including loading trays of mail to transportation fixtures with ones of said transport mechanism ~~(50)~~ and unloading trays of mail from the transportation fixtures with others of said transport mechanisms ~~(50)~~.

16. (Amended) The method of receiving and dispatching in claim 14 including loading trays of mail to transportation fixtures and unloading trays of mail from transportation fixtures with substantially all of said transport mechanisms ~~(50)~~.

FILED